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Etzioni's Communitarian Realism as a Guide to Foreign Politics?

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Abstract

Sociologist Amitai Etzioni has gained much attention for his communitarian realist theory of foreign politics. Etzioni's conception of an adequate, principled and pragmatic, foreign politics emphasizes both empirical and moral factors. This article analyses Etzioni's foreign politics view from a political-ethical perspective. It claims that Etzioni's view lacks an adequate ethical and policy foundation and thus falls short politically-ethically. Etzioni's communitarian realism fails to offer proper guidance to foreign politics.

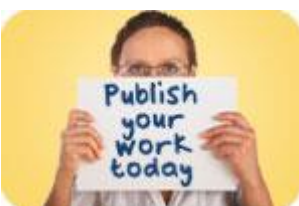
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Introduction

Amitai Etzioni is a renowned sociologist, prolific writer, and influential public intellectual, who has inspired political leaders such as Bill Clinton, Jimmy Carter, Tony Blair, Helmut Kohl, Gerhard Schröder, and Jan Peter Balkenende.[1] In his books *From Empire to Community* (2004a) and *Security First* (2007), Etzioni offers a bold plea for a communitarian realist theory of international relations and foreign policy - 'foreign politics', for short. In the former book, Etzioni extends the communitarianism he became famous for in the 1990s (Etzioni 1993; 1996) from the domestic to the global realm. He develops a longer-term vision of international relations, arguing that principal and pragmatic reasons exist for creating a world order that features 'global community' rather than 'American empire'. In the latter book, Etzioni defends the immediate necessity of a non-Wilsonian, realistic yet morally sound American foreign policy, offering principal and pragmatic arguments for the primacy of global security promotion rather than worldwide democratization or other idealistic goals. The two books differ in focus, but they share the view that not only military and economic factors but also normative ones play an important role in foreign politics. Unlike (neo)realists who trivialize or even deny the international use of normative power, Etzioni claims that moral principles are also at work in today's world: 'as a global community is beginning to form - normative factors are growing in importance' (Etzioni 2004a: 213). And since 'what we [Americans] ought to do and what it is in our interest to do, tend to converge' (Etzioni 2007: xvi), the creation of a more 'communitarian' world politics out of a still rather 'realist' one has become a serious possibility. Indeed, what Etzioni's communitarian realism does is 'trying to steer a course between an overzealous idealism and an overcynical *realpolitik*' (Elshtain 2008: 1393, emphasis in original).

In this article, I claim that, from a political-ethical perspective, Etzioni's communitarian realism fails to offer proper guidance to foreign politics. 'Political ethics' I define as the empirical-ethical reflection on decision makers' choices that is based on three assumptions: (i) all politics is a goal-oriented activity; (ii) politics, including international relations, is a domain of moral choice, not of pure necessity; (iii) the diversity of moral codes, systems, and theories does not impede moral-political theorizing (cf. Hoffmann

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1999: 28-30). Clearly, Etzioni (2004a; 2007) shares these assumptions, writing: 'rather [than siding with the liberal or conservative ideological camp,] I try to be guided by empirical evidence and moral reflection' (Etzioni 2007: xiii-xiv; cf. 2004: 213). His communitarian realist work, then, is best conceived as an exercise in political ethics. Yet my thesis is that this foreign politics view of Etzioni's falls short as such.

I shall argue that Etzioni fails to make adequate use of each of two political-ethically indispensable, independent yet interrelated perspectives: '(philosophical) ethics' and 'policy'. 'Ethics', as I understand it here, focuses on the articulation of moral norms and principles that are sufficiently clear, precise, and justified for serving as standards of measurement for the evaluation of political practice. However, ethics is necessary but not sufficient in (foreign) politics. It is naturally silent about enabling and limiting conditions that ground possible courses of action. 'Policy' focuses on a sound empirical-political analysis of feasibilities and infeasibilities, good and bad action consequences, paying serious attention to economic, technological, historical, cultural, and power realities. However, policy, too, is indispensable but not enough. Without ethics it easily degenerates into satisfaction with 'the possible', allowing assumed values and procedures, and economic or institutional considerations to dominate. Together, the two perspectives express the concern that political ethics include basic moral-philosophical notions as well as empirically-based consequentialist arguments about the goodness and badness of various political states of affairs, and thus show true, normative prudence (Gustafson 1996; Krueger 1991; Coll 1999; Amstutz 2008; cf. Kamminga 2008). What I argue, then, is that Etzioni's understanding of foreign politics lacks an adequate grounding in both perspectives and thus goes without practical wisdom (prudence).

Etzioni's communitarian realism

Developed in the early 1990s, Etzioni's (1993; 1996) communitarianism assumes a tension between the 'I' and its autonomy and rights and the individual's responsibilities for the common good, that is, the 'We' that offers stability, order, and identity. Etzioni rejects both the liberal emphasis on the 'I' and the conservative stress on the 'We' as one-sided. A good society seeks a 'balanced position' between the two, relying as much as possible on moral suasion, not on power (Etzioni 1993: 26-27; 2008b: 170). Etzioni's communitarianism justifies obligations to compatriots. Particularistic obligations, argues Etzioni (2002), are a key part of what constitutes human beings' identities. Also, particularistic communities nurture free agency and universalism, diminish the need for state coercion, humanize relations, and promote human flourishing.

Yet Etzioni's communitarianism aims to transcend the domestic domain. Indeed, 'the greatest need for a new understanding along...communitarian lines is a study of transnational relations, since the world is becoming ever more one social system' (Etzioni 2008b: 171). Thus, Etzioni (2004a: 4) asks whether a group of nations can share robust common goals and interests, and develop a willingness to make the required sacrifices. His answer is yes, because there is a growing influence of normative elements in international relations (see below). Nations first form a number of regional bodies, which as communities can develop shared policies more easily. This, then, would make possible the formation of a global community: a 'Global Nation', albeit a *sui generis* one (Etzioni 2004a: 193, 199, 201).

Communities, Etzioni (2005a: 129; 1996: 127) argues, have two features, which both operate transnationally, not just domestically. First, community members are involved in a web of criss-crossing, affective bonds. The rise of transnational citizenship, remittances, affective communications, voluntary associations, and social movements suggest that some senses of identity and loyalty are being formed transnationally. Second, communities share a moral culture. A shared set of values and norms exists in the transnational domain, on a low yet rising level. Human rights seem the best example; other norms that gain worldwide (although not always that deep) respect are 'women's rights', environmental concern - the Kyoto Protocol is evidence of this (Etzioni 2005a: 135-136) - and to some extent whaling limiting, ivory trade bans, opposition to land mines, and rejection of the Bush Doctrine of unilateral and pre-emptive

intervention. Etzioni (2006; 2007: 194-201) underlines 'sovereignty as responsibility', conceiving this new but widely adhered principle as the international application of communitarianism. The right to act at home as one desires does not hold for human rights violators. The principle challenges the Westphalian notion of sovereign nation-states, balancing nations' rights with their responsibilities to the 'international community', which may intervene when a nation neglects its duties to its people. Hence the widespread condemnation of the United Nations' inaction against the 1994 Rwanda genocide or the 1995 Srebrenica massacre; hence the transnational legitimization of the 1999 NATO intervention in Serbia to stop ethnic cleansing in Kosovo. To those who doubt whether there can be a global 'we' without a 'they', as communities are typically defined in separation from other human groups, Etzioni (2004a: 195-196; 2005a: 141) responds that 'the new "they" are weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and pandemics [SARS, anthrax and botulinum toxin, HIV]; they fully qualify as enemies of humanity'. Etzioni (2005a: 143) admits that all this does not guarantee that a global community will evolve, but he insists that sociological factors facilitate community development even on the global scale. And he adds: 'Communities...do not come in digital switches, on or off; they come in varying degrees of thickness' (Etzioni 2004a: 197).

According to Etzioni (2004a; 2004b), the global community is empirically forming *and* morally valuable. The 'evolving global normative synthesis' should be favored, as it leads toward a 'good society' (Etzioni 2004b: 244). Fortunately, what happens is that 'East and West are...moving toward the middle of the autonomy/social order spectrum, and that each has covered part of the way' (Etzioni 2004a: 30; cf. 2004b: 15). The 'West' brings to the transnational dialogues that engender this synthesis a heavy stress on individual rights and choice in political and economic matters. The 'East' contributes respect for the common good, authority, and social obligations. The synthesis, then, is a communitarian one, featuring both 'Western' autonomy and 'Eastern' social order. Accordingly, the upcoming global society can be seen as 'good': it is based on a 'carefully crafted' balance between autonomy and order; it continuously re-examines its autonomy-order balance; and its order is based more on 'normative controls' than on political coercion (Etzioni 2004a: 20-22; 2004b: 218-219). Hence Etzioni (2004a: 23-27; 2004b: 220-223) criticizes the Eastern 'export' of autonomy-disregarding ideologies and social designs, but especially the Western tendency to export only autonomy and neglect the foundations of the social order, particularly by urging free market virtues on other countries. Neoconservatives and Wilsonian liberals forget that the lack of order in countries freed from communism, Taliban, or Saddam shows that spreading Western principles cannot suffice.

In the final analysis, the world *needs* a 'true global community' (Etzioni 2004a: 214), one protected by a state of its own, and so it will strive for one. The present regime of nation-states, American dominance, great powers, international organizations, and transnational social movements is grossly insufficient. It is cumbersome and ineffective when it comes to solving the problems of capitalist globalization, such as proliferation of nuclear weapons, terrorism, genocide, ethnic cleansing, famines, international crime, trafficking in people, environmental degradation, and spread of infectious diseases. A strong global architecture is needed in which morals, power, and costs are shared; and indeed, it is emerging (Etzioni 2004a: chs. 9-13). This new polity is not replacing the old system, but adds a supranational layer of institutions. What will arise, then, is a quasi-European Union (EU) global system, 'in which the holding of sovereignty is split between nations and supranational bodies [and which] returns to a feature of pre-Westphalian Europe, where authority over a people was divided between the local rulers and the Church' (Etzioni 2006: 83; cf. 2004a: 182-187, 191-193, 199). Etzioni (2004a: 187) warns, though, that Europeans seem hardly prepared to make the kind of sacrifices that national community members are willing to make for one another. He argues that the way the 'new' order is coming into being is through the American-led formation of a Global Safety Authority (GSA), which paves the way for global authorities in the fields of health, environment, welfare, human rights, and social service. The GSA was created to deal with terrorism, but it is broadening its scope to include nuclear de-proliferation through a Proliferation Security Initiative and related activities that go beyond the 'old' Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. Etzioni does not expect the GSA to dismantle and the old system to fully return, if only because of the continuous threat of terrorism and nuclear proliferation. Most likely is the further expansion of the GSA's missions to include pandemics curbing and humanitarian intervention. Seeking to become more responsive to global institutions and communitarian values, the GSA will probably become a lasting element of the new global architecture. The eventual result will be 'somewhat like a nation writ large' (Etzioni 2005b: 1659), 'an actor in a way that the European Union already is' (Etzioni 2005b: 1660). After all, 'nations are considered communities invested in a state, and if one can have a community of almost 1.3 billion (in China), one may also have such an imagined community of 6 billion citizens of the world' (Etzioni 2005b: 1659). Thus, 'the nation-states will gradually become more "invested" in the shared community, as nurturing it will become part of their commitment even when it conflicts to some extent with their particularistic, parochial, national interests' (Etzioni 2005b: 1660). Etzioni stresses that this process toward a global polity is a gradual one,

with setbacks as well as benefits. Regional community formation is essential first, because it is impossible to go directly from more than 190 nation-states to global governance (Etzioni 2005b: 1657-1660). Yet we may expect 'the global state, whose first duty - like that of all states - is to protect the safety of the people living in its territory' (Etzioni 2004a: 212).

What is to be done now? What should the foreign policy of the United States as an economically and militarily great and, therefore, morally responsible power (Etzioni 2004: 90-91) entail? The Bush Doctrine mistakenly made democracy the top foreign policy priority (Etzioni 2007: xiv). Not democracy, but security is primarily lacking in failed states, newly liberated states, and the Middle East. Moreover, democracy may be highly desirable, but security at least is achievable (Etzioni 2007: 3). Etzioni, then, opts for a foreign policy of 'Security First' for the global community. '[F]ocusing on security...is not only in the best interest of the United States and its allies, but is also in the interest of most if not all peoples...It is effective *and* right, pragmatic *and* principled' (Etzioni 2007: xii-xiii; emphasis in original). 'Security' means '*basic* security, the conditions under which most people, most of the time, are able to go about their lives, venture onto the street, work, study, and participate in public life..., without acute fear of being killed or injured - without being terrorized' (Etzioni 2007: 2; emphasis in original). Etzioni moral justification of this 'Primacy of Life' policy runs as follows:

'[H]ow the United States should conduct itself abroad [depends] on [the] recognition that the world is in a Hobbesian state and is not yet ready for a Lockean one...Much of the world is [close] to the raw, brutish, violent state of nature that Hobbes wrote about...The world first and foremost requires a higher level of security. As long as nations can threaten others with weapons of mass destruction or be threatened by massive terrorism, other considerations...must take a backseat (Etzioni 2004a: 116-117). [O]n both principled and pragmatic grounds, the right to security is of the highest order...It is widely agreed that the first duty of the state is to provide security [even if this entails the use of force] - on the domestic front. With the international reality being even more brutal than the internal conditions of many nation-states, this dictum applies with special force to the priority that must be accorded to forming a stable global order...[T]he main reason that the right to security takes precedence over all [other, legal-political and socioeconomic rights] is that all the others are contingent on the protection of life - *whereas the right to security is not similarly contingent on any other rights*...[This] claim...is also supported by the observation that in the criminal codes of all decent societies, the penalties for murder, maiming, and torture are much greater than those for petty theft, discrimination, and other crimes...This is also the reason that the prevention of genocide is now considered a much more legitimate reason for intervening in the internal affairs of another nation, than is, say, democratization' (Etzioni 2007: 5-7; emphasis in original; cf. 2004a: 116).

Etzioni insists that his Security First approach provides key guidance not just for establishing security in Iraq and Afghanistan, handling conflicts with rogue states (North Korea, Iran), and dealing with failing states (Russia), but also for assessing under what conditions armed interventions may be justified. The Primacy of Life principle articulates the international community's humanitarian responsibility for intervention: 'when genocide or ethnic cleansing is unfolding, armed intervention to stop it is both morally right and a price worth paying' (Etzioni 2007: 33; cf. 31; 2004a: 117, 129). However, armed intervention is not justified to make a people's political regime more democratic or human rights-attentive, or to protect it from internal challenges. We should have stopped the genocides in Rwanda and Sudan (like in Somalia and Kosovo), but not have intervened in the internal affairs of Grenada, Haiti, and Panama. We should avoid intervention decisions to 'become inconsistent and difficult to justify, aside from raising false expectations in the populations involved'; and 'interventions are best limited to help provide basic security rather than to bring about regime change...Troops should not be used for nation-building or reconstruction' (Etzioni 2007: 31; cf. x; 2004: 117-118). Thus, 'we cannot hide from the fact that painful and costly sacrifices must be made to achieve "merely" basic security. Ethnic cleansing often cannot be stopped without bringing home body bags' (Etzioni 2007: 3). Etzioni stresses that, while both national interest realism and naïve idealism have morally bad implications, his own Security First approach rests on solid moral foundations:

'[Neo-realists may hold that] humanitarian interventions should not be included in our foreign policy, unless they happen to serve a more immediate national security interest...But a nation that accepts the

importance of limiting itself by moral judgments, and that adopts the Primacy of Life as the mainspring of legitimacy for its foreign policy, will be unable to maintain this justification successfully if it is applied only to securing the lives of its own citizens and not those of others. For a principle to be legitimate it has to be capable of being applied universally...A Security First policy is much more modest, much less demanding [than] a policy of worldwide democratization (Etzioni 2007: 32-33). [It] has moral foundations all its own. It avoids squandering many thousands of lives and scarce resources in the pursuit of elusive or illusory goals; it avoids delays in coping with conflicts that result from pursuing such goals; it avoids making promises that cannot be met, thus avoiding the loss of credibility abroad and at home - credibility that is essential for a successful foreign policy; and it avoids the hubris implicit in attempting to deliver more than one is capable of delivering (Etzioni 2007: 4). The legitimacy of the approach relies in part on its consistent application, one that respects...life simply, indeed all lives' (Etzioni 2007: 193).

Stressing Security First for the global polity, Etzioni (2004a: 166-167) rejects more global equality and more U.S. action on this front; as with global democratization, squandering of resources should be avoided. He points to problems concerning the effectiveness of funds spent and the ways how such transfers may happen: the oppressed will not unite to make the powerful surrender, and guilt-provoking rhetoric will fail. Rather, once global security has been achieved, 'the evolving global architecture should commit itself to ensuring that all people are [granted the basic minimum of three meals per day, clothing, shelter, and health care], not as a reflection of some socialist conception of equality but because of the basic moral worth of all human beings' (Etzioni 2004a: 169). Socioeconomic equality is wrong: '[a] world in which basic supplies are securely available is vastly preferable to one in which whatever meager resources are available are more equally distributed' (Etzioni 2004a: 169; emphasis omitted). Moreover, 'given that equality is unattainable [and] that promoting it often squanders the political appeal of those who care about the vulnerable members of society, equality is a notion best avoided' (Etzioni 2004a: 169). Etzioni, then, harbors doubts about ethical arguments for development aid:

'Most often cited among ethicists who hold that affluent nations owe such foreign aid is...Peter Singer. He argues that there are duties we assume toward human beings whether or not they are members of our particular community...Communitarians...need not necessarily object to this proposition;...basic human rights and dignity are indeed universal. Particularistic communal responsibilities are not a substitute for universal claims...Furthermore, there are those who argue that if we can help others without imposing great burdens on ourselves, we ought to do so. Accordingly all human beings enjoy a fundamental dignity as potentially virtuous beings, which may be nurtured by economic development...On the other hand, some have raised a whole series of ethical concerns about the negative effects of economic development aid. One concern is the emergence of [aid] dependency...Not only can foreign aid diminish the competitiveness of local economies, it is said that it can "support governments hostile to social justice or structural reforms," and prop up corrupt or unworthy leaders...Still others hold that removal of Western barriers to exports of the products of poor nations should be preferred to ongoing aid payments. [Another] concern is with the intrinsic nature of economic development: that it is too materialistic and may irreparably undermine the spiritual and moral and civic roots of traditional societies...[W]hat our moral intuition informs us [is that] every human being, by virtue of being human, is entitled to a basic minimum standard of living...We also have an obligation not to squander those resources available for economic aid. Whatever level these resources reach, even if all the "have" nations were to dedicate 1,7 percent or more of their GDP to foreign aid, there would still be numerous legitimate needs that remained unmet' (Etzioni 2007: 67-68; cf. 2002; 2008d).

Etzioni appears also skeptical about the need for environmental care. He recognizes that 'the more that people across the world become involved in the high production/consumption project, the more the environment is undermined' (Etzioni 2004a: 58). Yet he thinks that radical environmental policies make no sense in the absence of actual massive threats:

'[A]lthough numerous governments pay lip service to environmental protection and are willing to undertake some limited steps, major expenditures and adaptations cannot be realistically expected. All this would change if the environmental crisis equivalent of a pandemic arose. When there was a sense that the depletion of the ozone layer would cause irreparable harm to life on Earth, national governments worked together to develop an international framework[: the] Montreal Protocol...Similarly, if the world were to

face...a clear and present danger due to sizeable global warming, it likely would act...As with welfare, those who wish for more action are better off finding new interests to further engage the nations of the world and stronger normative arguments to present than berating the rich' (Etzioni 2004a: 171).

Etzioni (2008c: 103) adds two other skeptical arguments. '[C]limate improvement...is not a pressing national security issue for the United States'; and 'whatever the United States and its allies do...is most likely to be more than offset by damage to the climate from China and India and other emerging economies'.

Etzioni ends up negative about all global projects not security-related, at least for the shorter run. Thus, Etzioni (2008a: 1452) argues that the harsh conditions typical of international relations greatly limit what can be done. Approaching this sphere with the ambition to seek a just global community or an end to discrimination, exploitation, and violation of the freedoms of speech and religion risks producing evil outcomes. It likely leads us to squander limited resources on wanton activities, thereby undermining the attainability of security. Etzioni (2008a: 1458) observes that 'the United States is still the premier global military power, and [that many], especially the EU and Japan, want a seat at the table but are very reluctant to allow their youth to die for [new global institutions formation] or even make significant budgetary allocations for these purposes'. Unfortunately, even communitarian policies, says Etzioni (2008a: 1452), could be harmful: the quest for an ideal state may lead to allocating scarce resources away from accomplishable tasks.

Ethics

I now argue that Etzioni's communitarian realism fails ethically. Thus, its ethics-related set of claims does not entail moral norms and principles that are clear, precise, and justified enough to be able to serve as standards of measurement for political evaluation.

First, Etzioni's claim that a society, national or global, is good when it maintains a carefully crafted balance between ('Western') individual autonomy and ('Eastern') normatively controlled, social order, lacks adequate ethical precision and, especially, justification. To begin with, it is unclear what Etzioni means by 'carefully crafted', and so it will be very hard to establish if some society features a carefully crafted order-autonomy balance. More seriously, from Etzioni's own perspective, one reason to doubt the goodness of a global community is that such a community may endanger the overall moral consistency of his communitarianism. As he himself holds, nation-states' nurturing of a shared community may conflict with their own communal interests. Etzioni's (2002) own communitarian account suggests that the interests of the existing, particularistic community ought to take priority over those of the not yet existing, global community. But if so, it is unclear to what extent the members of present communities should value a global community at all and help it come into being. More seriously still, Etzioni does not offer an explicitly ethical defense of the underlying, communitarian (realist) conception of (global) society. Etzioni needs such a defense for making a compelling case for his stance that a sound normative social synthesis may result from a blending of two values - autonomy and the common good - excessively emphasized in practice. For now, it remains unclear why a global middle ground between liberal individualism and conservative collectivism should be regarded as a 'good' development. Etzioni fails to show ethically why a (global) society should value freedom and order so highly; higher, apparently, than other values international ethicists have defended, such as human rights (including legal-political and socioeconomic rights), democracy, equal treatment of women, minorities, and dissidents (Ish-Shalom 2008), and - hardly discussed by Etzioni - global distributive or corrective justice (Beitz 1999; Pogge 2002). Indeed, Etzioni almost completely ignores the global justice debate between communitarian or social liberals (notably Michael Walzer and John Rawls) and cosmopolitan liberals (notably Peter Singer, Charles Beitz, and Thomas Pogge) that has figured prominently in moral and political philosophy since the 1970s. Without a convincing ethical critique of the cosmopolitan position, it remains unclear whether (rich) nations should

not make (much) more sacrifices than Etzioni envisages, and work to diminish the present gross global inequalities in income and wealth rather than stimulate the global normative synthesis of a 'good' global society that allows such inequalities to persist.

Second, Etzioni's claim that the first duty of a state, national or global, is to provide security to its own people, even if this entails the use of force, lacks conclusive ethical defense. Etzioni argues as follows: (i) it is widely agreed that the first duty of the state is to provide domestic security, even if this requires using force; (ii) with international reality being (even) harsher than domestic reality, this dictum applies especially to the priority of forming a stable global order; (iii) security takes priority over legal-political and socioeconomic rights. Now Etzioni's argument for (iii) is ethically good (contra Ish-Shalom 2008: 1286) but not good enough. It seems hard to deny that the right to security, as this includes freedom from deadly violence, maiming, and torture, is deeply fundamental: without life itself being secured, other rights can have no meaning.[2] Yet if what makes a right most basic is that it directly protects what is most ultimate in life, namely life itself, then it should be remarked against Etzioni that security, even if necessary, may not be sufficient. Drawing on Henry Shue's (1996) defense of 'basic rights', one may hold that the right to 'subsistence' (and perhaps also the right to 'liberty') is (are) just as foundational as the right to 'security' - thus also needed to safeguard the Primacy of Life. But moreover, (i) and (ii) are questionable ethically. As regards (i), it should first be remarked that Etzioni never examines the pacifist ethical critique of violent state practice. Perhaps more importantly, he ignores 'just cause' as one basic proposition of the just war tradition, which entails that violence can only be justified if it is directed toward the establishment of conditions under which violence does not take place, that is, if it restores conditions of peace and justice. While such a restoration might involve the right to collective self-defense, it does not involve the unqualified right that Etzioni's statist account mandates. Here Etzioni overlooks the alternative argument that the duty of a state to provide domestic security is conditional on the actions of its people being peaceful and just (Brown 2002: 104).[3] And concerning (ii), obviously this part of the claim has no directly ethical but at best practical importance. In short, Etzioni's present claim is not as self-evident as he seems to think. Ethically, security may well come before most other values, but there follows no automatic complete moral primacy of a domestic or global Security First policy by all means.

Third, Etzioni's claim that the United States and its allies have a moral obligation, even an overriding one, to provide (basic) security for the citizens of all the world's nations carries various ethical shortcomings. To start with, Etzioni's assertion that a transnational moral obligation to provide security exists remains seriously undefended. Even if the right to security is more basic than all or most others and states indeed should preserve security first, it does not automatically follow that some powerful state has the responsibility to promote security not just at home but in other states as well. Why are the United States and its allies obliged, even overridingly, to establish security worldwide - in Iraq and Afghanistan, in rogue states, in failed states, and so on? Etzioni insists that 'a nation that adopts the Primacy of Life as the mainspring of legitimacy for its foreign policy, will be unable to maintain this justification successfully if it is applied only to securing the lives of its own citizens' and that 'for a principle to be legitimate it has to be capable of being applied universally' (quoted above). However, this view overlooks that the issue of the *scope* (e.g., national, regional, global) of a moral obligation to protect some moral standard is, at least partially, independent from the issue of the *validity* (e.g., local, universal) of the standard involved; it is at least possible, then, to argue that each state is only obliged to protect the universal standard of security within its own domain. Moreover, even if Etzioni is right that a transnational obligation to safeguard the Primacy of Life exists, then it would not simply follow that there are no transnational obligations just as pressing as, or perhaps even more pressing than, the one to promote security. Indeed, Etzioni's own, plausible Primacy of Life logic may imply the (demanding) obligation to provide 'subsistence' (Shue) worldwide. Etzioni may be right that achieving basic security will demand 'painful and costly sacrifices', but he might actually be underestimating what is ethically required from rich countries such as the United States (see also below). Furthermore, Etzioni does not show why states have no additional moral obligations, such as fighting religious and traditional values responsible for the suffering of women, or - indeed - promoting democracy abroad (see also below). Etzioni may want to insist that we should avoid what is ideal and stick to what is realizable: a realistic understanding of world affairs requires security to come first and that unrealizable cosmopolitan or feminist utopian visions should be abandoned (cf. Ish-Shalom 2008: 1295-1296). However, this would clearly not eliminate the ethical issue involved: moral obligations, even if demanding, cannot be ruled out by insecure, empirical appeals to 'realism'.

Fourth, Etzioni's claim that (humanitarian) intervention is justified if and only if it is directed at stopping

massive violence inflicted on people by their own state lacks sufficient ethical defense. Etzioni holds that a Security First policy would have entailed stopping - by the use of armed forces - the genocides in Rwanda and Sudan, but not armed intervening in the internal affairs of Grenada, Haiti, and Panama. However, Etzioni does not show why there is an international right, let alone an international duty, to foreign intervention in the first place, and why states should be willing to pay the human costs for intervention in other states. What Etzioni overlooks is that the Primacy of Life principle is a necessary condition for intervention in cases of genocide but not a sufficient one. It is not self-evident - even when we assume transnational humanitarian obligations to exist - that, as Etzioni seems to believe, states should be willing to let their soldiers fight and die for so abstract a goal as the security of 'strange' people in far away countries. This is also why Etzioni's reply to the (neo)realist objection that U.S. intervention in Somalia and Kosovo might have been unwarranted for not serving any clear American or allied security interest falls short. Indeed, he does not refute the realist-ethical position that humanitarian interventions should not be included in foreign policy, unless they happen to serve a more immediate national security interest, perhaps such as limiting immigration from Haiti (in such a case, soldiers would not merely have to fight for causes with which they may find it very hard to identify themselves) (cf. Hendrickson 1997; but see also Wheeler 2000: 31-32, 49-51). Particularly in the case of armed humanitarian intervention, if a nation should adopt the Primacy of Life as its foreign policy justification, it may rightly demand a further ethical argument to make it accept that it will be unable to maintain this justification successfully only in case of securing the lives of its own citizens. Even if it is true that the Primacy of Life principle is universally valid, a *transnational* responsibility to rescue strangers by armed intervention is not the automatic implication. Alternatively, one might ethically dispute Etzioni's insistence that armed interventions are best limited to help provide security rather than to create regime change. If indeed intervention is justified in principle, then it seems unclear why troops should *principally* not be used for nation-building, reconstruction, democratization, or human rights promotion.

Fifth, Etzioni's claim that affluent countries have no (clear) obligation to promote global socioeconomic equality, assist poor nations in economic development, or radically pursue environmental goals such as climate improvement, is ethically too quick and may well fail altogether. Etzioni's choices are made mostly on 'realistic' grounds - largely determined by short-term American capacities (Ish-Shalom 2008) - rather than also ethical ones. Whereas Etzioni emphasizes the great yet manageable costs of fighting genocide or ethnic cleansing, one may remind him that the major source of human misery today is not enslavement or massacre (reasons for humanitarian intervention) but abject poverty and malnutrition. Compared to humanitarian intervention, the international obligation issue arises just as powerfully, even if less dramatically, when it comes to poverty relief (Brown 2002: 158-159). Hence an ethical analysis of foreign politics should not ignore the obligations the global rich might owe the global poor. Yet Etzioni's biggest omission seems his neglect of 1.200 million people living on less than half below the World Bank's \$1/day poverty line, with 18 million of them dying prematurely from poverty-related causes each year. Again, his failure to adequately address world poverty seems to contradict his own emphasis on the Primacy of Life. He does not discuss the recent ethical debate concerning the potential responsibility of the United States and other Western countries for stunted life chances worldwide - for those possible 18 million deaths per year through the economic order they impose on the world (Pogge 2002) or, perhaps more plausibly, for the bad lot of people everywhere because of their continued contribution to global climate change. Admittedly, Etzioni mentions that every human being, by virtue of being human, is entitled to a certain basic minimum. However, he belittles requests for more global equality and more straightforward U.S. action on this front by immediately shifting to practical problems as regards effectiveness and the ways how transfers may come about. He rejects socialist justice as 'poverty for all', but also overlooks arguments for Rawlsian-like principles of global equality that allow global inequalities to exist if these work to the benefit of the worst-off (Beitz 1999; Pogge 1989; Moellendorf 2002). Lack of ethical reasoning also characterizes Etzioni's discussion of arguments that hold that affluent nations owe less privileged nations help in economic development. Thus, his treatment of Singer's argument that there are duties toward human beings whether or not they are members of our particular community is grossly inadequate. In thinking that communitarians may well accept Singer's thesis on the ground that particularistic communal responsibilities are no substitute for universal claims, Etzioni strongly underestimates the radical, community-threatening implications of Singer's (2002) utilitarianism. Furthermore, Etzioni does not address in depth the argument that if we can help others without imposing great burdens on ourselves, we ought to do so. In fact, he sidesteps the *fundamental* issue by focusing on the negative effects of development aid. His fear of dependency and helping corrupt dictators stay in power seems justified, but this does not solve the underlying issue of obligation. The same holds for his insistence that we are obliged not to squander aid resources. A utilitarian, Singer does not advocate well-motivated politics with bad consequences, yet would presumably insist that, as the fundamental issue - the potential existence of transnational obligations to assistance - still stands, we should seek for better methods of helping the poor. Perhaps what is indeed called for is removal of Western barriers to exports of poor nations' products, or concern with the intrinsically materialistic and culture-undermining nature of economic development (Etzioni). Yet even if so, the Singerian question of an obligation to help guarantee life for people dying

right now of poverty would then remain unaddressed. Again, Etzioni does not only do no justice to Singer's (2002) argument for a 'positive' global obligation of humanity; he also completely ignores Pogge's (2002) argument for a 'negative' global obligation of corrective justice (arguments with probably very costly implications; cf. Sterba 2008). His further objection to 'development obligations' that even if all the 'have' nations dedicated 1,7 percent or more of their GDP to aid there would still remain numerous unmet legitimate needs, overlooks the possibility that 'have' countries will simply have heavier obligations. Finally, Etzioni also neglects the debate concerning the fair intra- and intergenerational distribution of the burdens of global climate change and the Western, particularly American, moral responsibility for the life-threatening consequences of this process (Singer 2002; Garvey 2008). In sum, Etzioni's international ethics is at best incomplete, ignoring fundamental questions and the ethical debates involved. It is, then, by no means clear that, if international obligations do exist, we should not try to achieve a higher and broader moral purpose than Etzioni's Security First. And his appeal to the limited power resources of American foreign policy is not convincing either: what is 'limited' is rather flexible, especially insofar as acquired power resources have a story of gross injustice behind them.

To conclude, Etzioni's use of ethics in his communitarian realist view of foreign politics fails. Indeed, he pays far too little attention to the relevant ethical literature and its debates.

Policy

I now argue that Etzioni's communitarian realism is inadequate when it comes to policy. Thus, its policy-related set of claims does not entail a sound empirical-political analysis of feasibilities and infeasibilities, good and bad action outcomes, and economic, technological, historical, cultural, and power realities.

First, Etzioni's claim that a global community is gradually emerging, as transnationally a sense of identity and loyalty as well as several shared norms are developing - a global synthesis of 'Western' autonomy and 'Eastern' order -, seems based more on communitarian wishful-thinking than on empirical evidence. To start with, the evidence Etzioni offers in favor of his position is not very solid, and he demonstrates little attention for potential counter-evidence. Thus, he says that the rise of transnational attachments has communitarian implications, as some transnational social or communal bonds, a sense of identity and loyalty, are taking shape - provided that one views communities as non-dichotomous but continuous. He adds that the defining feature of a shared moral culture is met in the transnational domain, albeit on a low level that seems to be rising. But if so, the extent to which a global community is really emerging or could come into existence at all may easily become the subject of endless debates (Smith 1995; Gray 2005). Etzioni offers examples of transnationally shared, fairly strong norms and of global moral dialogues, but he does not examine potentially important counter-examples of non-shared norms and does not show that the dialogues he mentions are more than mere 'cacophony' (cf. Hoffmann 1981: 164). Arguably, Etzioni's mentioning of the Kyoto Protocol as evidence of the widespread, albeit not very deep, normative commitment to the environment is curious, if we think of American abstinence - particularly the Bush administration's attempt to declare Kyoto 'dead' - the widespread lack of serious efforts to implement the Protocol's demands, and the strong inadequacy (at best a modest contribution to curbing greenhouse gas emissions, weak enforcement mechanisms) of the Protocol itself. Moreover, he hardly makes it clear that the Western tendency to export autonomy and the Eastern tendency to 'export' social order, if both these tendencies do exist, are inevitable and irreversible, and could lead to a stable, moral consensus-based global community. Thus, realist Colin Gray (2005: 1611-1615) argues not implausibly against Etzioni that his global communitarianism, its gradualism notwithstanding, is overambitious, overreaching, and without compelling historical support. Etzioni neglects that, under anarchy, the absence of a truly global community is an 'enduring condition' and so that the communitarian project cannot solve humankind's global security dilemmas: '[I]ntercommunal strife is...a condition of our political existence' (Gray: 2005: 1614). Etzioni's communitarian realism is not free from circularity, offering a 'future proofed against many...unpleasant surprises [-] against the kinds...that the lack of community enables to occur' (Gray 2005: 1615). If, for systemic and enduring reasons, the game of states has not essentially altered during the course of millennia in a system of anarchy, then the communitarian promise of benign transformation

in global politics would not seem fulfillable (Waltz 1979: 66; Gray 2005: 1616-1617; even if, from a historical perspective, it cannot be proved that such transformation will always remain impossible). If anything, Etzioni's belief that superthreats promote the international communitarian agenda is wishful thinking. To say that WMD or aids will evoke a cooperative global response resting on a consensus of values is '[to express] hope over historical experience'. Sociologically, we can imagine only one global threat scenario that uniting mankind: a 'menace from outer space' (Gray 2005: 1619). Ultimately, Etzioni's vision is one of wishful expectation rather than policy: a global community *will* develop, because we *need* one to develop.

Second, Etzioni's claim that a multilayered global architecture is to emerge, of which an expanding and 'communitarianized' GSA will be a lasting element, lacks convincing empirical and normative backing and thus does not indicate a proper longer-term direction to foreign politics. To begin with, Etzioni overplays the potential global impact of the EU as the most advanced transnational polity. Thus, the EU seems best conceived as an 'expanded-particularistic' polity, not as a potentially global one. Moreover, it is hard to deny that strong tensions exist between the forces that seek to strengthen the EU's government-like institutions and those that seek to preserve national sovereignty. Etzioni (2004a: especially 187) himself explains that in the EU layered sovereignty only exists to some extent and that the EU still has a 'community deficit' without strong bonds among its members and strong loyalties to it. If so, how can we reasonably expect a solid global architecture to emerge, sustained by a 'global nation'? Also, it is doubtful whether the emergence of Etzioni's favored new global structure can ever be a serious possibility. He himself expects the process to have serious setbacks, and also sees the formation of regional communities, of the kind the EU hopes to be one day, as but one essential step in the required direction. The trend he envisages toward less reliance on interests and hard power and more reliance on legitimacy and communal institutions seems idle. A great weakness here is Etzioni's tacit assumption that strategic great-power competition and war is over. Thus, he does not examine the challenge posed by the re-emergence of geopolitical rivalries among states (Gray 2005: 1620). With Gray (2005: 1621), one can think of (probably much more important than WMD diffusion to marginal actors or terrorism) 'the rise of China as [an] aggressive...superpower; the return of a forceful authoritarian Russia; and the slow emergence of a European superstate' (again, not a potentially global one) that strives for a 'collective political influence to match its economic weight in a world characterized by competitive multipolarity' - thus no transition 'from empire to community' ('new'), but 'from hegemony to multipolar great-power rivalry' ('old'). Etzioni's communitarian realism implausibly assumes that great states will approvingly supply communitarian support to an American-led world order (Gray 2005: 1621-1623). That, then, the GSA in a broadened version, let alone global authorities in the other fields Etzioni distinguishes, may become a lasting element of a new global architecture is then highly doubtful. But most seriously, it is questionable whether we should *desire* such a new structure to emerge, as that seems to resemble the pre-Westphalian world in which no one authority had a monopoly of control in any one territory, that is, no one power had total sovereignty. Etzioni ignores the question of why people should value the EU in the first place, especially if there is, and perhaps can be, no real European 'community'. And he ignores Hedley Bull's (2002: 246, 275) well-known normative argument against global 'neomedievalism': such a system of criss-crossing loyalties may well end up more violent than the present sovereign states system. Etzioni, then, does not show how his preferred global system will be capable of meeting the present global challenges with any success.

Third, Etzioni's claim that, as the world is still Hobbesian rather than Lockean, a pragmatic - both principally and empirically grounded - foreign policy is directed, first and foremost, at promoting security (instead of democratization) is confused. Etzioni says that the answer to how the United States should behave abroad - namely, promote security first - depends on the recognition that the world is still in a Hobbesian condition rather than ready for a Lockean one. However, he does not really defend his observation that the world is still Hobbesian, not refuting, for example, Bull's (2002) and Alexander Wendt's (1999) arguments that international politics has been mostly Lockean in modern times. Also, we have just seen that Etzioni actually seems blind for the potential re-emergence of multipolar rivalry. Indeed, the observation of Hobbesianism seems a strange one to make for a communitarian who strongly believes (even if naïvely) in an already existing movement toward a global community and polity. The present claim seems hard to reconcile with Etzioni's belief that a new normative principle of international order - sovereignty as responsibility - is not just normatively valuable but also factually developing, due to the influence of communitarian considerations. Etzioni himself argues that sovereignty-as-responsibility is the application of communitarianism to the international realm, challenging the Westphalian notion of sovereign nation-states, and balancing nations' rights with their responsibilities to the potentially interventionist international community. Clearly, this does not sound like the Hobbesian motto: 'kill or be killed' (Wendt 1999). Finally, it is doubtful whether even a Lockean world, one of 'live and let live' rather

than 'mutual aid' (Wendt 1999), can be taken by Etzioni as solid enough a basis for global community building.

Fourth, Etzioni's claim that a foreign policy of Security First may be realistic, efficient, credible, consistent, and hubris-free is doubtful in various ways. According to Etzioni, compared to human rights idealism, a Security First policy is much more consistent, modest, much less demanding, and the conflicts between its ideals and the vital interests of the nations involved are much more limited. Such a policy has its costs, but it can be adhered to much more readily than a policy of worldwide democratization. Etzioni insists that the moral force of the principled but realistic foreign policy he advocates lies in its avoidance of squandering many lives and scarce resources for utopian goals, making false promises, thus avoiding the loss of credibility abroad and at home, and the hubris of trying to help others more than one can. Etzioni complains that critics pay insufficient attention to the cruel conditions of the international environment, which greatly suppress the possibilities for action. Approaching this unforgiving area with the beautiful ambition to create a just world risks producing highly bad outcomes at the cost of limited resources and attainable moral purposes. However, while Etzioni appropriately stresses a consequentialist realism (albeit doing so is not as unique as he suggests), he may well underestimate the costs of his own policy in terms of body bags or - if he is really consistent in defending Primacy of Life obligations - financial burdens for compensating for the harmful effects of global climate change and perhaps even global capitalism. More fundamentally, we should ask: why, actually, is it so bad to take some more risk in foreign policy (cf. Kamminga 2008)? As we have seen, Etzioni badly needs to reconsider the ethical foundations of his overall argument. Etzioni might retort that, as Japan and the EU have much to wish but little to contribute, the United States is still the global power that has to do most of the work. Yet, even if so, if we acknowledge that under current circumstances a credible foreign policy simply has to meet high ethical demands, making high costs and taking much risk may not be ruled out for reasons of consistency. Ironically, and to a certain extent inappropriately, at this point Etzioni appears to be more concerned about the purity than the consequences of policy.

Fifth, problematic is Etzioni's claim that foreign policies aimed at promoting global socioeconomic equality, assisting poor nations in economic development, or radically pursuing environmental goals such as climate improvement are undesirable, as they are not only principally contestable but also may entail squandering of scarce resources or human lives. Etzioni insists that climate improvement is very slow and costly, and entails no direct security interest for the United States. But even if this is true, not pursuing a radical climate policy seems inconsistent with communitarian realism: such national egoism is at odds with Etzioni's own universalist belief that the security of other communities and their members, now and in the future, should matter, too (Ish-Shalom 2008), and perhaps also otherwise morally unacceptable (Singer 2002). Also, Etzioni's claim contradicts his own moral worries about the Earth's incapacity to sustain an ever-growing population at ever-higher levels of production and consumption. While Etzioni even appears hesitant about communitarian global policies (he personally favors so much) for the damaging consequences they may have, his criteria concerning environmental policy fall short for being unduly realistic without serious ethical input; once Etzioni goes beyond the unduly narrow understanding of Security First, moral arguments seem to vanish. He may realistically expect that only if the world were to face an imminent danger due to global warming, it likely would act. However, to stress this so heavily is to trade in international political ethics for an approach that is virtually non-ethical and problem-solving at best.

To conclude, Etzioni's use of policy in his communitarian realist view of foreign politics falls short for employing puzzling reasoning, neglecting moral concerns, and ignoring empirical-political counter-evidence that suggests his reliance on mere hope.

Conclusion

Etzioni's communitarian realist political ethics seems attractive at first sight, but it is seriously flawed: it does not rest on a solid ethical and policy foundation. While his principles and policies are often clear enough, their justification is inadequate. Etzioni's critique of American universalism and its particular tendency to democratic overstretch is well-taken, but especially his neglect of ethical cosmopolitanism and its potentially costly impact on American (and European) foreign policy is unwarranted: it ignores, without sufficient argument, the quest for global justice. Presumably, the ultimate problem of Etzioni's approach is methodological. More generally, Etzioni's communitarianism is explicitly backed by a methodology at once sociological and pragmatic rather than ethical. Thus, it is more sociological and empirical and less normative, opposing the 'unrealistic assumptions' of those liberals who believe that individuals can do without social bonds and have total freedom of action (Etzioni 1996: xx, 5). More specifically, Etzioni's communitarian realism, although it is partially, and emphatically, based on moral reflection, insufficiently incorporates ethics, that is, the academic discipline designed for the study of morality. It is precisely because of Etzioni's exclusion of the potentially critical function of ethics that makes his 'what we ought to do' so easily and comfortably coincide with his 'what is in our interest to do'. His belief that foreign politics can be principled as well as pragmatic is seriously misguided: it blurs the boundaries of ethics and policy as two independent (albeit political-ethically related) concerns, is insufficiently analyzed, and is at best a happy contingency. Indeed, one wonders what would come first if the convergence would not, or no longer, hold: principles of pragmatism? Etzioni's claim that the United States should not take climate change too seriously in view of its own interests, suggest the latter - an inconsistent and morally dubious outcome.

If the argument of this article has been correct, it is up to Etzioni to show that his overall argument can still be made good. For now, we must judge his communitarian realism to include both 'unduly conservative' (ethics and policy) and 'unduly progressive' (policy) elements. Indeed, his foreign politics vision is a remarkable violation of the demands of a normatively prudent political ethics. Thus, it does not, or at least not yet, seem a good source of inspiration for present and future, American and other political leaders.

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Notes

[1] I would like to thank my colleagues Irma Van Dijk and Nienke De Deugd for their helpful and encouraging comments.

[2] Etzioni's empirical-moral argument that the primacy of security is supported by the criminal codes of decent societies having developed more severe penalties for murder, maiming, and torture than for other crimes, while ethically less compelling, may have additional force.

[3] Consider, for example, Charles Beitz's (1999, 175-176) global distributive justice-based argument that 'a war of self-defense fought by an affluent nation against a poorer nation pressing legitimate claims under the global principles...might be unjustifiable, giving rise to a justified refusal to participate in the affluent nation's armed forces'. Consider also Darrel Moellendorf's (2002) thesis that global justice entails that states engaged in 'international injustices' - war, pollution, harboring terrorists, but also distributive injustices - are not protected by sovereignty from the possibility of external intervention.

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